

**TOWN OF GRANBY
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION 2011
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 4, 2012**

PRESENT: Lowell Johnson, Vice Chairman; Terri Ann Hahn, Annie Hornish, Jim Lofink, and David Russell

OTHER PRESENT: Several residents

The special meeting of the Charter Revision Commission 2011 was called to order by Vice Chairman Lowell Johnson at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Johnson reviewed the process that would be followed for receiving public comments. hard copies of the current Charter 2002 were made available to the public.

PUBLIC

Peter Dinella made several comments. He indicated he did some research using the Internet browser and has provided a copy to the Commission. Other comments he made were:

- A town meeting is a 17th century concept. One definition is 'a town meeting is when most residents of town come together for a meeting.' His thought was that a site capacity for a town meeting should accommodate the town's population to allow for most residents to attend, however; the high school auditorium does not hold 7,000 people. Therefore, our town meeting contradicts the basic concept of a town meeting.
- Section 10-5 of the Charter discussing the number (230) of people in attendance to hold a budget vote is more of a sample survey vote instead of a census survey vote. He indicated a small amount of people decide on the budget rather than a majority of people.
- He is in favor of a machine vote. He feels that today's modern lifestyles make it difficult to attend a town budget meeting. In fact, his neighbor travels a lot and is unable to attend.
 - To support his favor of a machine vote, he commented in New Hampshire towns, cities, etc., have options of two main types of annual meetings (traditional or ballot-vote meeting (SB-2 form)). The state legislature instituted SB 2 form in 1995 because of concerns that modern lifestyles had made it difficult for people to attend traditional town meetings.

Maier Andrea made comments.

- He concurs with a referendum machine vote for the budget.
- He is not in favor of reducing the number of people in attendance to hold a budget vote.

- He mentioned at the last municipal election that the Town of Granby was the 3rd lowest percentage of eligible voters voting at that election. The towns of Sterling and Columbia were before us.
- An example might be the Town of Simsbury has twice the population of Granby and the town votes on anything that is 1% higher than last budget.

Robert Flannigan made comments.

- He agrees to a referendum machine vote. He works at night. He feels the same people pass the budget every year.
- He is in favor to separate the education and town budget.
- He suggests enforcing a specific space area between soliciting a vote and location of the vote.

Jack Powers made comments.

- Make the vote process more public. He wants more current communication on the town's website.

Paula Johnson, Planning and Zoning Chairman made comments. She indicated that she received a letter and was requested to send written comments or come to a meeting.

- She indicated that the Planning and Zoning Commission is a seven (7) member commission. When asked for input as to whether this commission should be appointed or an elected. She prefers the commission to stay as elected and not appointed.

Judy Goff made comments.

- As a past member of Charter Revision Commission, she indicated they increased the number of people in attendance to hold a budget vote and feel it works.
- She asked to consider adding a clause or section that discusses a method to remove a member from a board, commission, or committee if that person is not fulfilling their role.

Jim Glenney made a comment.

- He thought the town budget meeting should change to a vote on Saturday instead of a Tuesday. He felt that more people may be available on a Saturday instead of a Tuesday because of personal or work schedules.

Mike Mercier made comments.

- He concurred with Jim Glenney to changing the machine vote to a weekend to catch more participation.
- He indicated that allowing the number of voters (230) to pass a budget was ludicrous.

Ron Desrosiers made comments in a voter capacity. He is a member of the Board of Selectmen.

- He has seen three charter revisions and feels that the annual town budget meeting is a good approach and works. The two boards, Board of Education and Board of Selectmen, present operating budgets and the Board of Finance operates as a financial check. It goes to a machine vote when there is controversy in the budget.
- The East Hartford Town Council approves the budget without a vote.
- He commented that he wasn't sure an additional effort for a machine vote is warranted. Citizens have elected the Board of Selectmen, Board of Education, and Board of Finance to represent them in the town's government, which includes the budget. If the town's residents don't like the town officials, they shouldn't be voted in.

The public engaged in a general discussion regarding the above comments. Vice Chairman Johnson asked the public if they look at the town's website. The majority of the public said yes. Other comments were:

- Elderly residents are leaving because of the taxes.
- Prefer to have the polls open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for town referendum machine vote.
- It's difficult to vote someone out of office if they run unopposed.
- Unfair to use 2/3 majority to decide on the budget and Saturday would be a good day for a town meeting.
- Perhaps the percentage of democrats and republicans in the elected positions in town could be decided by the town committees. This may allow for a board to be all democratic or republican.
- It is believed that the general statutes guide how the board members should be represented. Research may be required.
- Feels there is a short lead-time with the information provided so that people against it cannot form a quorum to express their views in a public way.
- Requested opinions on separation of the budget between the school and town.
 - A bad idea; a separation of parents and non-parents occurs.
 - It would disrupt the process of the budget heavily.
 - A one budget vote is preferred, however wants a machine vote.
- Questioned how the Charter Revision Commission was appointed.
 - Town committees suggested names and the Board of Selectmen appointed the members.

- The election process is run with a lot of volunteers. Finding people to participate on boards can be a full time job.
- Questioned why the police department is an administrative agency and whom does the Chief of Police report to.
 - The Chief of Police reports to the Town Manager who reports to the Board of Selectmen.
- The state statues require the charter to be reviewed within every ten years. The charter can be reviewed at any time. Either by petition or the Board of Selectmen.
- For clarification of an elected position, in particular, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the elected office position of a board or commission requires more of a commitment because there is more work involved.

Mark Lockwood made comments.

- Consider a change in Section 10-5 of the Charter – Annual town budget process.
 - Permit absentee voting
 - Set a specific time the vote is to take place
- Asked for an explanation of a town meeting and annual town budget meeting.
 - Explained the town meeting allows for absentee voting and the other does not.

Larry Smith made comments.

- Would like to see the vote on the budget go to a machine vote because it would show a better representation.
- Consideration should be given to separating the school and town budgets because it might give a better voice.

ADJOURNMENT

On a **MOTION** by Annie Hornish, seconded by David Russell, the Board voted unanimously (5-0-0) to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia I. Chieski
Recording Secretary